DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 511 FL 002 644

AUTHOR	Green, Jerald R.
TITLE	Kinesics in the Foreign-Language Classroom. ERIC Focus Reports on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Number 24.
INSTITUTION	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, New York, N.Y.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Communication (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	71
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	MLA/ACTFL Materials Center, 62 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011 ($.50)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Associative Learning; *Cultural Context; *Cultural Education; Instructional Program Divisions; *Language Instruction; *Nonverbal Communication; Nonverbal Learning; *Paralinguistics; Teaching Methods; Teaching Techniques; Visual Learning

ABSTRACT

The classroom presentation of authentic nonverbal behavior as a legitimate and useful activity in the teaching of the foreign culture is explored in this report. The author focuses on the need for cross-cultural inventories for each of the commonly taught languages in American schools and colleges. Means by which currently-used language texts can be correlated with nonverbal, high frequency gestures are explored. A review of the development of kinesics as a branch of linguistics concentrates on contributions of early pioneers in the field. (RL)

EDO 55511

ERIC Focus Reports on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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Price: 50 cents

From MLA/ACTFL Materials Center

62 Fifth Avenue

New York, N. Y. 10011

1971

A Focus Report: Kinesics in the Foreign-Language Classroom

Jerald R. Green

ABSTRACT The classroom presentation of authentic nonverbal behavior is gaining in acceptance as a legitimate and useful activity in the teaching of the foreign culture. Foreign-language educators who argue for the contemporary view of the foreign culture acknowledge the dearth of useful data of this type and call for the production of cross-cultural gesture inventories for each of the commonly taught languages in our schools and colleges. The colloquial dialogues found in many school and college language texts are ideally suited as carriers of nonlinguistic cultural patterns. The language teacher who is sensitive to the communicative value of nonverbal behavior and who has internalized some of the high-frequency gestures can easily gloss the dialogue with authentic foreign-culture gestures and execute them as appropriate during the presentation of the dialogue. Pupils can thus acquire important features of the foreign culture and can relate them to the social context in which they occur in the foreign environment.

INTRODUCTION. Kinesics—the study of the patterned body motion aspects of human communication—is an infant science. As a legitimate subsystem of linguistics it is less than twenty years old.[1] Normally included under the rubric of kinesics are gestures, facial expressions, posture, and walking style. Some researchers also consider proxemics—the culturally-coded structuring of space and distance in human interaction—as a kinesic phenomenon. Most studies of foreign-culture kinesics, however, are limited to those hand, arm, and shoulder movements which are defined popularly as gestures and to facial expressions. The other features of kinesics are extremely elusive and thus less susceptible to systemization.

In today's foreign-language classrooms kinesics is still a relative stranger. A few short years ago, however, the science of kinesics was an almost totally unknown phenomenon to the vast majority of foreign-language teachers. The increased interest in and indeed the very awareness of kinesics is doubtless attributable to (1) the investigations and writings of a small group of kinesic researchers (linguists, anthropologists, sociologists) and the vision of a few foreign-language educators who circulated their findings and discussed the potential pedagogical applications of their work, and (2) the profession's growing concern with authenticity in the area of linguis-

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[1] Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Introduction to Kinesics* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Inst., Dept. of State, 1952).

tic behavior (pronunciation and intonation) and in the field of extralinguistic behavior (cross-cultural understanding and biculturation).

Prior to the legitimization of the science of kinesics and the publication of Birdwhistell's pioneering effort, it was certainly not uncommon for foreign-language teachers who had traveled or studied abroad to have observed, imitated, and perhaps even internalized some of the more "exotic" gestures of the foreign culture. These gestures were often regarded as quaint realia to be produced by the foreign-language teacher at the moment he sensed a diminution of pupil interest or he felt the need to engage in a foreign-culture activity. On these occasions, foreign-culture gestures might replace the ubiquitous bullfight *capote* or the Chartres *diapositives.* No criticism is implied of these activities for they were representative of the best in the teaching of the foreign culture.

Kinesics in the Context of the Foreign Culture. The shift in the linguistic objectives of foreign-language study which occurred in the late 1950's was accompanied by a reexamination of the cultural objective. If a modest level of cultural insight was to be an outcome of foreign-language study, then culture would have to permeate the materials of instruction. This mandate was a philosophical challenge to language teachers for whom culture was a term synonymous with civilization,[2] for whom anthropology was a discipline preoccupied with the "noble savage," and for whom linguistic prescriptivism and "culture every Friday" were characteristic of an all too familiar pedagogical syndrome.

There is no dearth of published material in the literature designed to inform language teachers of the anthropological approach to culture and to commend one technique or another to incorporate "deep" culture more effectively in their teaching. Nostrand[3] has argued for a thematic approach to teaching the foreign culture and has organized an inventory of foreign-culture desiderata by level for use in the secondary school, and Ladu[4] has "fleshed out" the framework in a useful resource document for teachers of French and Spanish. In keeping with the current emphasis in the literature, Seelye has translated some desired foreign-culture behaviors into behavioral objectives.[5] Each of these writers provides for the inclusion of culturally authentic kinesic behavior in his discussion of cultural activities and behaviors, but each also acknowledges that the profession is in need of an inventory of nonverbal behavior for each of the commonly taught languages in our schools and colleges.

Hayes has called for the production of cross-cultural gesture comparisons, systematically (perhaps thematically) arranged, with appropriate emphasis on the gesture and the social context in which it occurs most frequently.[6] In his useful book addressed to language learners, Hall urges the learner to observe the nonverbal behavior of the native drill master with a view to imitating both the linguistic and extralinguistic activity of the instructor.[7] Hall's advice is, of course, excellent, but it suggests the presence of a native model for students to imitate, a desirable but not always available condition.

[2] For a useful distinction between culture and civilization, see Nelson Brooks, "Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Foreign Language Annals,* 1 (March 1968), 204–17.

[3] Howard Lee Nostrand, "Levels of Sociocultural Understanding for Language Classes," in *A Handbook on Latin America for Teachers,* ed. H. Ned Seelye (Springfield, Ill.: Dept. of Public Instruction, 1968), pp. 19–24.

[4] Tora T. Ladu, et al., *Teaching for Cross-Cultural Understanding* (Raleigh, N.C.: Dept. of Public Instruction, 1968).

[5] H. Ned Seelye, "Performance Objectives for Teaching Cultural Concepts," *Foreign Language Annals,* 3 (May 1970), 566–78. Interested readers should also consult Seelye's essay in the *Britannica Review of Foreign Language Education, Vol. 1* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968).

[6] Alfred S. Hayes, "New Directions in Foreign Language Teaching," *MLJ,* 49 (May 1965), 281–93.

[7] Robert A. Hall, Jr., *New Ways to Learn a Foreign Language* (New York: Bantam, 1966).

The Role of Foreign-Culture Gesture. In most foreign-language textbooks in use in American schools and colleges, the basic dialogue is the vehicle for the initial presentation of vocabulary, grammar, and phonology. In addition to these functions, the basic dialogue is often "seeded" with high-frequency cultural patterns. These patterns may be linguistic (colloquial language, levels of familiarity or intimacy) or nonlinguistic (attitudes and values, behavior). The effective presentation of a basic dialogue—whether for eventual memorization or mere familiarization—requires a creative and indefatigable instructor. In addition to limitless energy and near-native pronunciation, the instructor should have at his disposal a repertoire of authentic nonverbal behavior. At best, he has traveled and studied widely in the foreign environment and has internalized the high-frequency gestures and their respective social contexts. Failing this, he knows of the existence of illustrated descriptions of foreign-culture kinesics and he consults these descriptions prior to the presentation of a new dialogue.

From a strictly technical point of view, increased authenticity is itself sufficient justification for the inclusion of the kinesic dimension in the language classroom. Provided the instructor does not attach a disproportionate importance to authenticity (linguistic or nonlinguistic) and thereby stifle spontaneity of expression, the kinesic component should be fostered and encouraged. Foreign-culture gestures—used authentically and intelligently—can serve to heighten pupil interest in the foreign language. The knowledge that speakers of other languages are also members of other cultures and that both verbal and nonverbal behavior are culturally-coded manifestations of that culture are often more relevant discoveries to young people than the discovery of a linguistic pattern.

The initial presentation of the basic dialogue is normally made by the classroom teacher, typically a native speaker of English to whom the target language is also a foreign language. We can probably safely assume that he has had no formal instruction in the foreign-culture kinesic system and, if, unlike the instructor we met earlier, he has had little or no immersion in the foreign environment, his movements—if any—during the initial presentation and subsequent repetitions of the dialogue will be those of an American "mover." This instructor will have lost perhaps the best opportunity for injecting greater authenticity into his dialogue presentation and he will also have forfeited the occasion to add a meaningful and motivating dimension to the conduct of his class.

It is neither unrealistic nor unreasonable to expect the language instructor to insist that his pupils use authentic foreign-culture gestures whenever appropriate in dialogue repetition. Indeed, it would be inconsistent to present a dialogue accompanied by authentic nonverbal behavior and then to permit pupil dramatization of the dialogue lines without this behavior. Further, the foreign-language teacher who has presented a dialogue with the accompanying gestures can use the same reinforcing movements to cue pupil responses or to assist a pupil to recall an exclamation, a short utterance, or a line of dialogue which he may have forgotten temporarily. In classes in which pupil memorization of the basic dialogue is required, it is not uncommon for pupils to be frustrated in their efforts to memorize the lines in proper sequence. Although it is true that the contrived sequence of dialogue lines has no intrinsic importance (other than meaningfulness), the immediate pedagogical usefulness of the dialogue (dramatization, participation, etc.) is reduced if the writer's sequence is not observed.[8] Nonverbal cues can aid in performing this vital recall function, thereby relieving pupils of the onerous and pedagogically questionable burden of memorizing the devised sequence as well as the lines themselves.

[8] Wilga Rivers, *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 145–46.

Kinesic Resource Material. Regrettably (but perhaps predictably), Birdwhistell's seminal work on kinesics, *Introduction to Kinesics,* has had limited impact or circulation outside the related disciplines of linguistics and anthropology. Most of the articles published before 1952 treated gesture as essentially a popular phenomenon and as such devoid of important communicative value and certainly not susceptible to analysis. The use of foreign-culture gesture was viewed as a change-of-pace, interest-heightening, and "exotic" activity which probably often had the effect of reinforcing stereotypes and exaggerating differences between cultures.

Perhaps typical of this early interpretation of the role of gesture are two articles published in the early 1930's. In these articles Kaulfers describes over fifty Spanish and Mexican gestures based largely on observation and personal communication with native speakers. The gestures are described in impressionistic narrative language and there are no accompanying illustrations. Kaulfers considers gesture as essentially a collateral and recreative language teaching activity for which the teacher might find an occasional moment at the end of the class hour or as a profitable means of relaxation from the formalities of routine drill and technical grammar.[9]

There are numerous popular articles and photographic essays on foreign-culture gesture which have appeared in magazines and the popular press. The Alsop picture article is perhaps typical of this human interest feature.[10] The popular interest in nonverbal behavior is evidenced by the success of Julius Fast's best-selling *Body Language.*[11]

Perhaps the first scholarly study of cross-cultural kinesics was Efron's analysis of Eastern European Jews and Southern Italians.[12] Efron compared the patterned similarities and differences in their gestural behavior and he studied the effects of social assimilation on the nonverbal behavior of the two groups.

The gesture studies published after 1955 reflect—to a greater or lesser extent—the influence of Birdwhistell's pioneering work in kinesics. Regrettably, however, few large-scale monocultural or cross-cultural studies have been published. The following discussion summarizes the foreign-culture kinesic sources available to the foreign-language teacher.

Teachers of French who wish to add the kinesic dimension to their teaching should consult Brault's very useful study of French gestures.[13] Brault describes twenty-one French gestures and also provides the typical linguistic behavior which accompanies these movements. The author also cites an interesting hypothesis regarding the anticipatory nature of French gestures and posits a possible analogy with the French phonological system. Brault's article, however, contains no illustrations.

In an effort to increase the usefulness of the Brault article for the native American teacher of French, Tsoutsos has prepared an illustrated inventory of the gestures described in the article.[14] With the assistance of two young French-speaking pupils (Parisian and Haitian), she translated the narrative descriptions into gestures which faithfully portrayed Brault's verbal description. Tsoutsos then photographed the native informant in the act of executing the gesture. Finally, she glossed three audio-lingual dialogues with gestures from the illustrated inventory. Her study contains twenty-four photographs.

[9] Walter Vincent Kaulfers, "Curiosities of Colloquial Gesture," *Hispania,* 14 (Oct. 1931), 249–64; and "A Handful of Spanish," *Education,* 52 (March 1932), 423–28.

[10] Stewart Alsop, "How to Speak French Without Saying a Word," *Saturday Evening Post,* 233 (24–31 Dec. 1960), 26–29.

[11] Julius Fast, *Body Language* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970).

[12] David Efron, *Gesture and Environment* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1941).

[13] Gerard J. Brault, "Kinesics and the Classroom: Some Typical French Gestures," *French Review,* 36 (Feb. 1963), 374–82.

[14] Theodora M. Tsoutsos, "A Tentative Gesture Inventory for the Teaching of French," M.S. Thesis Queens Coll. 1970.

Howard Lee Nostrand, whose concern with the teaching of the foreign culture—French culture in particular—is known to most foreign-language teachers, has not neglected the kinesic dimension in his published work. His ambitious *Background Data for the Teaching of French* contains a section on *la kinésique* in which he discusses French gesture and posture, facial expression, and social distance (proxemics).[15]

The teacher of Spanish has a considerably larger bibliography on Hispanic gesture available to him. In his excellent book on euphemistic language, Kany presents forty-two illustrations of gestures observed in Latin America.[16] The nature of Kany's book, however, requires that the user exercise extreme caution in the employment of these gestures. Saitz and Cervenka have prepared a very useful illustrated comparative study of Colombian and North American gestures.[17] This study, unfortunately, is not easily accessible.

Green has prepared an extensive inventory of peninsular Spanish gestures which is accompanied by numerous line drawings.[18] The gestures were collected from a wide variety of sources: (1) personal observation in the cities and towns, (2) personal observation in the university community, (3) fictional literature, (4) dramatic literature, and (5) contemporary theater. The Spanish gestures are grouped thematically in the book, that is, all movements associated with leave-taking and greeting are assembled and presented in the same section.

With few exceptions, each entry in the inventory contains the following information: (1) a narrative description of the execution of the gesture, (2) a line drawing illustrating the gesture, (3) the social context of the gesture (personal observation, contemporary theater, etc.), and (4) the "acceptability" of the gesture to a group of Latin American informants.

In order to demonstrate the pedagogical utility of the gesture inventory, Green reproduces four dialogues from commercially available audiolingual texts published since 1960 and glosses selected dialogue lines with appropriate gestures from the gesture inventory. The glossing takes the form of Arabic numerals which refer the user to the nonverbal behavior described and illustrated in the thematic inventory. A glossed dialogue from *A Gesture Inventory for the Teaching of Spanish* follows (p. 67):

Green suggests that the Spanish teacher first familiarize himself with the organization, scope, and contents of the gesture inventory before he attempts to utilize it as an instructional resource tool. He should then examine the dialogue to be taught with a view to determining which utterances in the dialogue can appropriately be glossed with authentic nonverbal behavior from the gesture inventory. The initial presentation, as well as all subsequent repetitions and dramatizations of the dialogue (or portions thereof), should be accompanied by the nonverbal behavior appropriate to the social context of the dialogue. Similarly, all pupil repetitions and dramatizations should be accompanied by the gestures modeled by the teacher.

The recommendation that the teacher consult the gesture inventory for appropriate nonverbal behavior prior to presenting the dialogue in the classroom is analogous to the practice of auditioning the programmed tapes to insure that his pronunciation and intonation are as authentic as possible. Another important analogy can be drawn between verbal and nonverbal behavior in the language classroom. It is obviously important that the teacher pos-

[15] Howard Lee Nostrand, *Background Data for the Teaching of French. Part A: La culture et la société française au XX^e siècle* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington, 1967).

[16] Charles E. Kany, *American-Spanish Euphemisms* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960).

[17] Robert L. Saitz and Edward J. Cervenka, *Colombian and North American Gestures: A Contrastive Inventory* (Bogotá: Centro Colombo-Americano, 1962).

[18] Jerald R. Green, *A Gesture Inventory for the Teaching of Spanish* (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1968).

Diálogo: Saludos, cervezas y helados[19]

Sr. Castillo:	¿Están los señores de López?	
Camarero I:	No, señor, no están.	(27—Refusal, Denial, and Simple Negation)
Camarero II:	Sí están, sí. Están sentados en la terraza.	(75—Pointing)
Sr. Castillo:	¡Ah, sí, ahí están! Gracias.	(60—Recall and Revelation)
	¿Cómo estáis?	(12—Blows of Affection)
Sr. López:	Estamos asados.	(118—Hot Weather Discomfort)
Sr. Castillo:	Estamos en verano, amigo.	(104—Resignation)
Sra. de López:	Sí, y estamos en Madrid.	(45—Emphasis)
Sr. Castillo:	¿Qué tal los chicos?	
Sra. de López:	Están bien, gracias. Están en Málaga con mis padres.	(57—Distance)
Sr. López:	¡Camarero!	(49—Attracting the Waiter)
Camarero II:	Diga, señor.	(95—Interrogation and Imploration)
Sr. López:	Un helado y dos cervezas.	
Camarero II:	¡Un helado y dos cervezas!	
Sr. López:	¿Dónde están mis cerillas?	
Sra. de López:	¡Mira!, están en el suelo.	(75—Pointing)
Camarero II:	¡Un helado y dos cervezas!	
Sr. López:	Están bien fresquitas, ¿eh?	(76—Superlatives and Extolment)

sess these skills but it is perhaps no less important that he insist on a reasonably high level of linguistic and nonlinguistic performance from his pupils. This would suggest that he correct and reinforce as well as model appropriate kinesic behavior if pupil internalization of high-frequency gestures is to be a viable cultural objective of the instructional program.

Another important source of kinesic data for the teacher of Spanish is the AATSP cultural unit *Spanish with a Flourish!* developed by D. Lincoln Canfield, a Hispanist long associated with nonlinguistic as well as linguistic phenomena.[20] The author has assembled a package of thirty-five slides plus a script and taped commentary depicting high-frequency gestures observed among Spanish-speaking peoples. Perhaps the most recent examination of Hispanic kinesics is provided by Poyatos in a *Hispania* article in which he redefines and updates the kinesics research program first identified by Birdwhistell and reviews three kinesic studies with pedagogical implications.[21]

There is apparently no source or inventory to which the teacher of German can turn for assistance in acquiring and internalizing authentic nonverbal behavior. In his essays on theater, the dramatist Bertolt Brecht refers frequently to the importance of nonverbal language in general and to gesture in particular.

It may be true, as Barzini has written, that Italians gesticulate more abundantly and more imaginatively than other people, but there is very little published information on Italian gesture that can be useful to teachers of Italian.[22] The relative dearth of data of pedagogical utility to teachers of German and Italian is doubtless a reflection

[19] Antonio J. Rojo and Paul Rivenc, *Vida y diálogos de España*, Teacher's Script, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1967). Rpt. in Green with kinesic glossing.

[20] D. Lincoln Canfield, *Spanish with a Flourish!* AATSP Cultural Unit 1, 1968. See a current issue of *Hispania* for information.

[21] Fernando Poyatos, "Kinésica del español actual," *Hispania*, 53 (Sept. 1970), 444–52.

[22] Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969). Barzini insists that Italians also use gestures more efficiently than other people.

of the enrollments in these languages. It may also be partially attributable to the rather large number of teachers of German and Italian who are native speakers of the language.

Of a more general nature, but nevertheless of interest to language teachers, is Birdwhistell's latest book, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication.*[23] Finally, all language teachers can profit from reading Edward T. Hall's excellent books on the extralinguistic aspects of human communication, *The Silent Language* and *The Hidden Dimension.*[24]

Conclusions. The progress made in the area of foreign-culture kinesics has been disappointing to date. This despite pleas from responsible foreign-language educators for more and better cross-cultural kinesic descriptions from kinesic researchers. The response to these genuine pleas has not kept the presses terribly busy.

In the meantime, language teachers are under pressure—legitimately imposed—to reorient their teaching of the foreign culture toward a more contemporary view.[25] That there exists considerable teacher resistance to this view is evidenced by the fact that language educators have been discussing it and commending it in the literature for more than ten years without more than a small measure of success. At least two factors can be cited as contributing to the opposition of some teachers: (1) materials and techniques for the teaching of culture were less well developed and had a much lower priority than basic language skill instruction in the crucial decade of the 60's, and (2) language teachers were apparently able to accept—in the philosophical sense—the concept of language as communication more readily than a more radical restatement of the cultural objective of foreign-language learning. Indeed, for many teachers, the belletristic view of culture was the source from which the prestige of language study issued forth.

Kinesics figures prominently in the contemporary view of culture, far more prominently than it did when it was regarded solely as a collateral or recreative activity. There is doubtless little—if any—teacher resistance to adding the kinesic dimension to their instruction, but this can only be accomplished if gesture inventories are developed and the kinesic data incorporated into materials of instruction.

Ideally, foreign-culture kinesic information should be presented to teacher trainees during the preservice phase of their professional preparation. This recommendation suggests an undergraduate culture course quite unlike the one presently available to language majors. The study abroad experience will reinforce the kinesic instruction and make it possible for the language major to internalize the nonverbal system of the target culture.

[23] Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1970).

[24] Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1961); and *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

[25] Paul M. Glaude, *Foreign Language Instruction in New York State for the 1970's: "The Culture Question"* (Albany: The State Education Dept., 30 April 1970).